

Thank you for this honor and having me out today. Supporting veterans is at the forefront of my office's daily tasks. Strongsville Post 3345 continues to be a strong advocate for veterans and Bill Overton is a veterans' service officer.

It is an honor to work with Bill and assist Post 3345 with file requests and VA claims. This is one of the ways Congress works best as we are on the ground floor assisting constituents.

Bill also helped shine a national spotlight on an issue that was brought to my attention, the National Cemetery Administration's order to remove Battlefield Crosses from multiple locations.

As you know, the **Battlefield Cross** is more than just the concrete and bronze they are made from. It is a symbol of loss and a sign of comfort. The Battlefield Cross is erected at outposts when a loss is incurred. The cross becomes a ceremonial place of remembrance where the fallen soldiers' comrades can come, pray, converse and just visit with the articles belonging to their brethren.

It is a sad sign of the times when the presence of a Battlefield Cross memorial in a national cemetery becomes controversial. The Battlefield Cross is a sign of comfort. It is a knowledge that although they gave everything, they are still present.

There is no place in the world where this is better demonstrated than our national cemeteries. Ohio Western Reserve is the final resting place for over 35 hundred veterans. It is the place they have chosen to have their bodies spend eternity

This is why their symbol for loss and their symbol for remembrance should remain. I was honored to submit the Fallen Warrior Battlefield Cross Memorial Act to ensure Battlefield Crosses would never again be removed due to an errant interpretation of the regulations. It must be made clear to the National Cemetery Administration that the Battlefield Cross will always be a symbol of remembrance and a tribute to the fallen. This bipartisan legislation will protect the display of these memorials at our nation's national cemeteries, commemorating the service of those who gave their lives for our nation.

On Wednesday, I was pleased to testify before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs concerning my legislation. With a few changes to the wording, my bill will now move to full committee and it is my hope it will soon pass the house.

A member of your post played a key role in ensuring the Battlefield Cross was replaced at our cemetery in Rittman. I'd like to invite Bill up here on stage as I present him one of my challenge coins as a token of appreciation. Thank you Bill, your assistance was instrumental in making this happen.